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ABSTRACT

This paper examines public attitudes toward physical education. In analyzing the problems faced by physical education professionals, the importance of widespread public information on the subject of physical fitness is emphasized. (JD)

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Utilizing Public Relations and PEPI For Recruiting Students Into The General Education Program

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND THE ERIC SYSTEM CONTRACTORS."

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Early in 1977 the Burgess Publishing Company came out with a textbook entitled 'Me and I'm Great! Physical Education for Children Three Through Eight! and authored by Susan Block. "Me and I'm Great", - what a most significant phrase for physical educators today. It seems to be evident in practically every geographical area that lots of people, from children to adults, are asking two questions: (1) What am I and what is good about me?, and (2) What does it take to make me feel great? If this is not a clear "sign" for physical educators to really take action in the promotion of their products (physical education and sport), I am not sure what else might be so significant.

Not too many years ago (1960's) it was obvious that although some people enjoyed their physical education and sport experiences, too many did not. In a few years we have come a long way as a result of the work that was done and is still being conducted by physical educators in the various colleges and universities throughout the country. The main driving force that changed the trend of a few years ago, relative to the attitudes of people toward the traditional physical education and sport programs, has been our ability to emphasize intellectually stimulating and scientifically accurate information in helping individuals better understand themselves and to assess their own needs. Simply, this means more people now than probably ever before can make good decisions about their lifestyle with respect to physical activity.

Obviously, accurate information provides for good decision making; therefore, we move closer to providing sound answers to the age old question of "WHY PHYSICAL EDUCATION?" Why should an individual identify emotionally, psychologically, and

SP011 968

physically education and sport activities?

The question, "Why physical education?" in many ways has become synonymous with PEPI (Physical Education Public Information). The PEPI project was originally intended to be an undertaking by physical educators to provide the public with information about their product. Much of the work PEPI consultants have been involved with has been at the public school level in trying to reach the parents as well as their children. With PEPI consultants and coordinators at the national and local levels constantly and consistently working to achieve this most basic objective, a basis has been developed for more young adults (college and university students) to know not only such answers to the "why" but to "how", "how much", and "when". Also, it has been obvious that when the PEPI people, along with other professionals in the field, have taken their message to the public, the attitudes of the older adult population have been affected. A prime example of this is the number of adult fitness and rehabilitation-type programs that the colleges and universities throughout the country are now conducting.

The trend seems to be one of a changing attitude toward individual lifestyle. More important, the major change in attitude seems to revolve around how physical activity can affect this lifestyle. A most critical factor evolving from this changing attitude is that the change is positive toward physical education and sport activities, which are the products we are trying to promote.

There is no doubt but what physical educators, health educators, recreators, dancers, and other professionals in the field at the college and university level have been instrumental in providing good answers to the why's, the how's, the how much's and the when's. The problem now seems to center around the dissemination of this information to the students and to the rest of the adult population. Here I am referring to the dissemination of knowledge in such a manner that a positive reaction occurs. More specifically, a reaction that will bring students from all areas within the college or university to our programs to find out the

capabilities of their body and how "they can be great" motorically speaking. This is where some of the PEPI concepts and theories can be utilized.

As the PEPI Project grew in scope, and I am sure some of you are more familiar with its growth than I, five points relative to the value of physical education were developed. These points may be redundant to some of you, yet I am convinced we can never lose sight of these very important values if we are to successfully promote our product. Besides, what better rationale do we have for the things we do. Briefly, these points are:

1. A physically educated person is one who has knowledge and skill concerning his body and how it works.
2. Physical education is health insurance.
3. Physical education can contribute to academic achievement.
4. A sound physical education program contributes to development of a positive self-concept.
5. A sound physical education program helps an individual attain social skills.

Remember, these points elude to a basic value which is: "Improvement of the quality of life for a lifetime." If you promote physical education and sport the PEPI way, the instillment of these points into the individual's value system is essential. Sell the concepts we have to sell with all the honesty and vigor that we have as professionals.

If colleges and universities are to use some of the PEPI concepts and/or the PEPI consultants and coordinators to promote physical education programs, the basic structure of PEPI should be understood. Remember, PEPI is national in scope, but it is implemented locally. There are PEPI coordinators and consultants in over 100 areas who work directly with newspapers, radio stations, television stations, magazines, and specialized media in exploring opportunities for exposure. I would challenge you to identify the individual in your area who serves as a local PEPI coordinator. Secondly, I would ask you how much you have utilized this individual's talent in

your department and/or school's public relations endeavors. Third, I would ask you to consider what you have done to identify an individual to serve as a local PEPI coordinator within your department and/or area, if there is not one at this time. Think about it... PEPI assistance is not expensive.

I recently received a letter from the School of Health and Physical Education at Oregon State University relative to their philosophy on public relations, and in many ways it is similar to some of the PEPI ideas. Public relations was defined "as everything that one says or does". Also, it was clearly stated that, "every member of the group is responsible and plays a part in public relations." Again, I challenge you to ask yourself if this exists in your situation.

To further clarify the PEPI way for promoting physical education and sport, it is obvious that public relations and communication are synonymous. Freeman Miller, the Eastern District PEPI Consultant, developed a communications manual for all district PEPI consultants. In this manual he indicated that:

> Communication does not cause change but that change creates a need for communication. The most relative example of this is PEPI. Changes such as the "New Physical Education and Title IX" created the need to communicate..

The changes we are now seeing in the students' attitude toward physical activity have created a need for our health, physical education, and recreation departments and schools to communicate what it is they have to offer toward enhancing a quality lifestyle.

It is evident that there are literally a hundred different ways this necessary communication could occur. The same time emphasis could be given to the five PEPI Project concepts for changing values. To identify functional methods for college and university health, physical education, and recreation departments and/or schools, it seemed only appropriate to go to the source. Over 50 departments and/or schools were asked to share some of their public relations techniques used to attract students from the general education program to physical education and sport type activities. They were also asked what they did to communicate with

the community, state, or region in order to promote physical education and sport. The following are some of the methods and techniques that have been used and apparently found to be effective. The first group represents strictly in-house kinds of operations:

1. Laboratory and clinic experiences and observations open to any interested student.
2. Wide range and variety of physical education service-type activity courses.
3. Free usuage of facilities during the noon hour to the public.
4. Caramate of the department to show students in high schools and junior colleges.
5. Physical education days in the student center.
6. Open house in the physiology laboratory for students to observe testing.
7. Student observation of adult fitness and adult cardiac rehabilitation programs.
8. Cooperative teaching in an allied health class on physical activity and fitness.
9. Student weight reduction programs in cooperation with the student health center.
10. Extensive intramural programs with long hours in operation per day.
11. The placement of a kiosk in a high traffic area that contains a 35mm carousel projector that is synchronized to an explanatory tape for a continuous talk show.
12. Department representative to a statewide guidance counselors conclave.
13. Departmental attendance to state supervisor's meeting.
14. Informing the academic community of departmental activities relative to physical education and sport.
15. Utilization of a graduate assistant to function in the area of mass

communications and public relations. Just might be your own PEPI coordinator at a local level.

16. Half-time demonstrations at football games and basketball contests for mass physical activity programs.

Look around your department for qualified people to get the projects initiated. There is a good chance that you will find the right individual. Also, it would certainly be appropriate for graduate and undergraduate students to get involved. Often there are student groups or organizations that are looking for projects.

The second group of public relation techniques and methods pertain more to the community-type of communication.

1. Clinics for the handicapped and aged.
2. Slide presentations that show values of physical activity in relations to individual health.
3. Adult fitness programs. Example: A slogan of a program might be "Shape Up! The idea."
4. Newsletters sent to alumni and institutional friends.
5. Radio and television interviews and talk shows. Example: Have you ever tried to get a television station to show the film, "All the Self There Is"? You might encounter more success that what you think.
6. Professional people in the community to serve as guest speakers for various classes and departmental events.
7. Blood pressure screening clinics in a local shopping mall.
8. Person to person community relationships.

Implementation of these techniques may be made through the cooperative efforts of the department with those community people who make use of your facilities or participate in some special program that is being conducted through the department. Community leaders may also be utilized.

The third group of public relation methods and techniques are those that the PEPI coordinators could provide you with the greatest assistance. These methods and technques deal primarily with teaching the masses.

1. Radio and television advertisements.
2. Newspaper articles and releases for significant days or weeks. Example: National Physical Education and Sport Week.
3. Activities in professional meetings and conventions at state, regional and national levels.
4. The use of promotional movies and films. Example: "The Sports Suite."

I encourage you to seriously think about these public relation methods and techniques along with the things you may already be doing. I encourage you to think about these possibilities "For the Health of the People You Serve".

I would challenge you to initiate some of these methods and techniques or put a greater emphasis on your existing public relations plan for "The Health of Your Department and/or School".

I would ask you to use the PEPI Project Coordinators and Consultants for "The Health of Physical Education and Sport." The PEPI Project belongs to you, make it's network function for your health and to demonstrate "How Great Your Department Can Be".

It is only appropriate to close by asking a couple of questions that seem to be the very essence of why we are in this field. First, "Are we capable of becoming or continuing to be the kind of sales people who can communicate to all students why physical education and sport activities are "great"?

Secondly, can we as professionals in the field work as a single unit in public relation endeavors to promote one single quality to all people, and that quality is "individual health"? In your opinion, how can we be "great" enough to do this as a profession?

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